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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 002765

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCIENCE ADVISOR NEUREITER
EB FOR A/S WAYNE, PDAS DONNELLY, DAS GADSDEN
EB/TPP/ATT FOR PEREZ
E FOR SHUB
EUR/ERA FOR HEN-NIL
OES FOR A/S TURNER, PDAS ROCK
STATE PASS USTR FOR STROJE, NOVELLI
STATE PASS USDA FOR APHIS:SMCCAMMON, USDA/FAS:BLUM
USDA/FAS/ITT:EJONES, USDA/FAS/OA:SLUTSKY
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USDA/OS/HEGWOOD
STATE PASS FDA FOR EFLAMM
EPA FOR OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATOR
NSC FOR EDSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/05/2007

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SUBJECT: ITALY AND BIOTECH: COULD BE (HAS BEEN) WORSE

CLASSIFIED BY: ECMIN MARGARET DEAN; REASON 1.5 B/D.

11. (C) SUMMARY. IN THE BUILD-UP TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S MAY 27-28 VISIT TO ROME, THE GOI GOT BUSY ON BIOTECH. PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI HAD MFA GIN-UP AN INTERAGENCY PROCESS TO CONSIDER THE GOI CORN BAN, THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE'S MISGUIDED WHITE PAPER, AND A POTENTIAL USG-GOI RESEARCH ACCORD. THE PM TOLD THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENT TO GO INTO A CORNER AND WORK OUT THEIR BIOTECH DIFFERENCES. BIOTECH, AS IT TURNS OUT, WAS NOT A MAJOR TOPIC OF DISCUSSION AT THE SUMMIT. IN ITS AFTERMATH, VARIOUS GOI CONTACTS ASSURE US THAT THEY HAVE HEARD OUR COMPLAINTS AND THAT, AT A MINIMUM, SCIENCE WILL BE A MORE SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THE FORTHCOMING GOI AND PARLIAMENTARY BIOTECH DEBATE. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH VISITING EB ASSISTANT SECRETARY, SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS DISMISSED THE MOA WHITE PAPER

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AS MERELY ONE VIEWPOINT AND NOT EVEN AN OFFICIAL ONE.

12. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED. PM BERLUSCONI SEEMS IN NO HURRY TO CLARIFY THE STATE OF GOI BIOTECH POLICY. SPEAKING BESIDE ALEMANNO AT A JUNE 3 PRESS CONFERENCE, THE POLITICALLY NIMBLE PM SAID ITALY SHOULD GO FORWARD ON BIOTECH RESEARCH "WITH
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MUCH CAUTION, BUT WITHOUT CLOSING THE DOOR TO TECHNICAL PROGRESS AND WATCHING WHAT HAPPENS IN OTHER COUNTRIES." ONE THING IS CERTAIN -- ALEMANNO'S AGGRESSIVE COUNTDOWN TO BIOTECH POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IS ON HOLD. HE HAD HOPED TO SPARK PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE THIS MONTH. NOW HE SPEAKS BRAVELY OF HAVING A COHERENT GOI BIOTECH POLICY IN PLACE BEFORE NEXT SPRING'S PLANTING SEASON. WE WILL KEEP THE PRESSURE ON. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) LOOKING TO REMOVE A POTENTIAL TRADE IRRITANT FROM THE AGENDA FOR PRESIDENT BUSH'S MAY 27-28 VISIT TO ROME, PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI HASTILY ORCHESTRATED OSTENSIBLE MOVEMENT ON BIOTECH IN THE RUN-UP TO THE SUMMIT. HE HAD THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, NEVER MORE THAN RELUCTANTLY ENGAGED ON THE ISSUE, CONVOKE AN INTERMINISTERIAL PROCESS TO CONSIDER GOI BIOTECH POLICY AND, MORE PARTICULARLY, TO REVIEW THE ITALIAN AUGUST 2000 BAN ON FOUR BIOTECH CORN VARIETIES APPROVED BY THE EU, THE POLICY WHITE PAPER LOOSELY AUTHORED BY THE AGRICULTURE MINISTRY, AND A PROPOSED USG-GOI ACCORD ON BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH. CALLS FROM SEVERAL GOI OFFICIALS JUST BEFORE THE SUMMIT ASSURED EMBOFFS THAT A MAY 22 MEETING OF THE MFA-LED AD HOC GROUP HAD PRODUCED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PM THAT WOULD PLEASE US -- CALLS TO REVOKE THE CORN BAN, DAMPEN THE WHITE PAPER, AND PROCEED WITH THE BILATERAL ACCORD.

14. (SBU) BIOTECHNOLOGY WAS BRIEFLY MENTIONED DURING THE PRESIDENT'S 50 MINUTE BILATERAL MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WITH THE LEADERS AGREEING TO DEFER THE SUBJECT UNTIL THE FOLLOW-ON DINNER. OTHER BUSINESS, HOWEVER, ATE UP THE TIME.

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15. (SBU) VISITING EB ASSISTANT SECRETARY TONY WAYNE AND ECONOFF MET WITH MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR EUROPE ROCCO CANGELOSI AND PM DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR AND G-8 SHERPA GIOVANNI CASTELLANETA ON MAY 30. CANGELOSI HOSTED THE MAY 22 INTERMINISTERIAL MEETING ON BIOTECH AND CASTELLANETA ACCEPTED THE GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE PRIME MINISTER. A/S WAYNE EXPRESSED TWO USG CONCERNS REGARDING GOI BIOTECH POLICY: THE FAILURE OF THIS GOI TO REPEAL THE UNJUSTIFIED CORN BAN ENACTED BY ITS PREDECESSOR AND THE STATUS OF THE MOA'S OVERTLY ANTI-BIOTECH WHITE PAPER AS THE DE FACTO CENTER OF GOI BIOTECH DEBATE.

¶6. (SBU) PERHAPS REFLECTING THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE HERETOFORE ATTACHED TO THE SUBJECT BY BERLUSCONI (WHO WEARS BOTH THE PM AND FM HATS), CASTELLANETA AND CANGELOSI WERE EACH WELL-VERSED ONLY ON NARROW AREAS OF THE BIOTECH DEBATE. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE CORN BAN LACKS ANY GROUNDING IN SCIENCE, CASTELLANETA SPOKE OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL DIFFICULTY OF REPEALING IT. HE REVEALED THAT BERLUSCONI HAS ISSUED A HURRY-UP ORDER FOR A RECOMMENDATION FROM HIS CABINET ON NEXT STEPS. COMMENT. ASIDE FROM MANUFACTURING "NEW"

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ACTION EB-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	CTME-00	DODE-00
	EUR-00	EXIM-01	E-00	VC-00	FRB-00	HHS-01	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OES-01	OMB-01	OPIC-01	ACE-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	USIE-00	G-00	SAS-00	/008W		

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P 071728Z JUN 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4114
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
HQ EPA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC

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SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE JUSTIFYING A REPEAL OR DISCUSSING OPTIMUM POLITICAL TIMING FOR REPEAL OF THE BAN, WE CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT THE MINISTERS HAVE TO DEBATE. THERE NEVER HAS BEEN ANY SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR THE BAN. END COMMENT. CASTELLANETA SAID BERLUSCONI HAS INSTRUCTED AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNO AND HEALTH MINISTER SIRCHIA TO ENGAGE ONE ANOTHER WITH A VIEW TO FINDING COMMON GROUND ON THE CORN BAN AND BIOTECH POLICY MORE GENERALLY. LOOKING TO STRIKE A POSITIVE NOTE ON BIOTECH, HE SAID THE PM'S BIOTECHNOLOGY COMMISSION AND THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY ARE HOT TO INK A RESEARCH COOPERATION ACCORD WITH THE USG.

¶7. (C) A/S WAYNE THANKED CANGELOSI FOR THE MFA'S RECENT EFFORT TO CONVOKE AN INTERMINISTERIAL PROCESS TO FOSTER A BALANCED BIOTECH DISCUSSION. NOTE. THE GOI HAVING NO INSTITUTIONALIZED INTERMINISTERIAL STRUCTURE, EFFORTS TO BRING MINISTRIES TOGETHER ARE NECESSARILY AD HOC AND LABOR-INTENSIVE. END NOTE. CANGELOSI SUMMARILY DISMISSED THE WHITE PAPER AS AN UNSIGNED POSITION PAPER SUCCESSFULLY DESIGNED TO STIMULATE DEBATE. HE SAID THE PAPER HAS NOT BEEN FORMALLY INTRODUCED INTO PARLIAMENT AND DID NOT SEE ITS INFORMAL CIRCULATION AS UNDULY INFLUENCING INTERMINISTERIAL
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DELIBERATIONS, WHICH HE SAID WOULD CONTINUE. CANGELOSI'S DEPUTY, RITA MANNELLA, TOLD ECONOFF ON JUNE 6 THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORGANIZING ANY FURTHER INTERMINISTERIAL MEETINGS ON BIOTECH HAS BEEN SHIFTED TO THE PM'S OFFICE AND THAT NO FOLLOW-UP MEETING HAD BEEN SCHEDULED. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH WE WELCOME MFA'S ENTRY INTO THE BIOTECH FRAY, MANNELLA'S COMMENTS CONFIRM THAT THE MINISTRY SEES ITSELF IN A CAMEO ROLE. PRIOR TO THE SUMMIT, SHE MADE CLEAR THAT MFA'S MANDATE FROM THE PM WAS TO DEFUSE THE BIOTECH ISSUE IN AN EFFORT TO GET IT OFF THE VISIT AGENDA. ABSENT FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM BERLUSCONI, MFA WILL BE LOOKING TO FADE AWAY AGAIN RATHER THAN TO DEVELOP THE IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE NECESSARY TO SHEPHERD AN ONGOING GOI BIOTECH DEBATE. END COMMENT.

¶8. (SBU) SINCE THE BIOTECH HICCUP BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT, THE AGRICULTURE MINISTRY HAS REASSERTED ITSELF AS THE PRIMARY GOI ACTOR ON THE FILE, ALBEIT WITH

IMPORTANT CHANGES. AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNO HAD LONG TARGETED A JUNE 4 MEETING OF THE "TAVOLO AGROALIMENTARE" (A LOOSELY KNIT FORUM OF AGRICULTURE STAKEHOLDERS) FOR BRINGING HIS WHITE PAPER ON BIOTECH POLICY OUT OF THE CLOSET. (CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS REPORTED SEPTEL.) INSTEAD, IN A JUNE 3 PRESS CONFERENCE HE REFERRED TO THE WHITE PAPER AS A WORK IN PROGRESS, EXPRESSLY ALLOWING THAT "WE WILL INCLUDE PROPOSALS, IDEAS, AND EVERYTHING THAT CAN HELP CHECK GMO'S OUT SCIENTIFICALLY IN THE WHITE PAPER." AT THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, ALEMANNO CALLED FOR A "MORATORIUM ON GMO'S" BUT EXPRESSLY QUALIFIED HIS OPPOSITION TO BIOTECH PRODUCTS AS BASED "PRIMARILY ON ECONOMIC GROUNDS" (COMMENT. I.E., NOT ON SCIENCE. END COMMENT.) AND INFLUENCED HEAVILY BY POLLS
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SHOWING THAT "70 PERCENT OF (ITALIAN) CONSUMERS ARE AGAINST THEIR USE." ALEMANNO SAID HE HOPES TO HAVE A POLICY PAPER TO SUBMIT TO PARLIAMENT BY THE END OF THE SUMMER WITH A VIEW TO ENACTMENT OF ITALIAN LEGISLATION BEFORE NEXT GROWING SEASON.

19. (SBU) APPEARING AT THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE, PM BERLUSCONI OFFERED WOBBLY GUIDANCE, SAYING "WE MUST UNDERTAKE TO GO FORWARD WITH (GMO) RESEARCH, WITH MUCH PRUDENCE, BUT WITHOUT CLOSING THE DOORS TO TECHNICAL PROGRESS AND WATCHING WHAT HAPPENS IN OTHER COUNTRIES." COMMENT. WE KNOW OF NO PRIVATE BERLUSCONI WORDS THAT CLARIFY HIS TERSE PUBLIC COMMENT. OUR GOI CONTACTS ARE TRYING TO PARSE THE ABOVE SENTENCE FOR HIDDEN MEANING JUST AS WE ARE.

110. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. ALEMANNO'S FAILURE TO LAUNCH HIS TWICE RE-WRITTEN WHITE PAPER AS SCHEDULED IS WELCOME NEWS AND A VALIDATION OF USG EFFORTS TO PRESSURE THE GOI TO CONDUCT A SCIENCE-BASED DEBATE THAT WOULD INFORM PUBLIC OPINION RATHER THAN MERELY REACT TO IT. THE MINISTER CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS THAT HIS EFFORT TO END-RUN ITALIAN SCIENTISTS AND THE GOI STRAIGHT TO PARLIAMENT HAS FAILED. WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN

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INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	CTME-00	DODE-00
	EUR-00	EXIM-01	E-00	VC-00	FRB-00	HHS-01	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	ITC-01	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OES-01	OMB-01	OPIC-01	ACE-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	USIE-00	G-00	SAS-00	/008W		

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P 071728Z JUN 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4115
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
HQ EPA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC

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IS THE MAKE-UP OF THE GOI SCIENCE TEAM FIELDLED AND WHETHER THE GROUP WILL BE FREE TO REASSESS SOME OF THE PSEUDO-SCIENCE CONCLUSIONS OF THE WHITE PAPER -- E.G., THAT BIOTECH VARIETY CROPPING WOULD INEVITABLY "CONTAMINATE" CONVENTIONAL VARIETIES.

111. COMMENT CONTINUED. ALEMANNO'S COUCHING OF HIS BIOTECH OBJECTIONS IN ECONOMIC TERMS GREATLY RESTRICTS THE ARGUMENTS AVAILABLE TO HIM. HE HAS NEVER GIVEN INDICATION THAT HIS GRASP OF ECONOMICS IS ANY BETTER THAN HIS GRASP OF SCIENCE. WE KNOW OF NO STUDY, FOR EXAMPLE, SUPPORTING HIS VIEW THAT OPENING THE ITALIAN MARKET TO BIOTECH PRODUCTS WOULD TAINT THE IMAGE OF ITALIAN QUALITY PRODUCTS WITH RESULTANT ECONOMIC HARM. AT A MINIMUM, ALEMANNO HAS BEEN COMPELLED TO ALLOW THE LEVEL OF DEBATE TO RISE FAR ABOVE THE SOPHISTRY OF THE

OUTSTANDING WHITE PAPER. WE REALIZE THAT THE MINISTER IS NOT ABOUT TO ABANDON HIS PURITY-OF-THE-MOTHERLAND AND TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS RHETORIC IN FAVOR OF SUBSTANTIVE DEBATE, BUT HE IS AT LEAST BEING FORCED TO LET OTHERS STAKEHOLDERS TALK. WE ANTICIPATE, GIVEN THAT ALEMANNO IS A PARTICULARLY ASTUTE POLITICIAN, THAT WITH EVERY STEP FORWARD PRO-BIOTECH FORCES ACHIEVE, THE MORE DEMAGOGIC AND RADICALIZED ALEMANNO'S
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RHETORIC AND RESPONSE WILL BE. WE INTEND TO BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED.
POPE

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